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**U.S. DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT**

Las Vegas Field Office
4765 Vegas Drive
Las Vegas, NV 89108

May 1998



**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY FOR PROPOSED
LAS VEGAS RESOURCE MANAGEMENT
PLAN AND FINAL ENVIRONMENTAL
IMPACT STATEMENT**



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Introduction and Background

This Executive Summary is provided to assist your review of the Proposed Las Vegas Resource Management Plan and Final Environmental Impact Statement, hereafter referred to as The Plan.

The Plan will provide management direction over approximately the next 20 years for most Bureau of Land Management (BLM) administered public lands and Federal mineral estate within the BLM's Las Vegas District (see map). These lands include approximately 2.6 million acres of BLM-administered lands in Clark County; 700,000 acres in Nye County; and 111,100 acres of mineral estate where the surface is not Federal land.

Two areas of BLM-administered land within the Las Vegas District [Red Rock Canyon National Conservation Area (NCA) and Nellis Air Force Range] are not included in The Plan. A General Management Plan is being prepared for the Red Rock Canyon NCA (approx. 195,000 acres) per legislation creating its special designation. Nellis Air Force Range Resource Plan (1992) addresses the Department of Defense's use and associated resource use limitations on approximately 2.2 million acres of public land within the Las Vegas BLM District.

Besides providing overall objectives and management direction for the various resources in the Las Vegas BLM District, The Plan identifies specific direction for designated special areas, oil and gas leasing, major transmission line corridors, special recreation management areas, Areas of Critical Environmental Concern, open livestock grazing allotments, and proposals to adjust scattered public land ownership patterns.

Although The Plan provides more specific guidance than the present Management Framework Plan and also additional guidance for new land use issues, it does not differ significantly from current management. The Plan establishes resource management objectives, directions, and guidelines for assuring that public land management considers present and future needs of resources and the public.

Public Participation

Draft. The Draft Resource Management Plan (RMP)/Environmental Impact Statement was available for a 90-day public review and comment period in May of 1992. During that time, 124 people provided comments at the 7 public hearings that were held (two in Las Vegas and one each in Mesquite, Pahrump, Searchlight, Laughlin, and Henderson). In addition, the draft RMP/EIS was distributed to approximately 1,000 individuals, groups, and organizations.

Supplement. A Supplement to the Draft was made available for a 90-day public review and comment in May of 1994. The Supplement addressed four issues that were either not previously covered or needed updating/revision of analysis. The four issues were consistency with the Desert Tortoise Recovery Plan, Utility Corridors, Range Reclassification, and Mineral Management after congressional designation of Wilderness. At a public hearing held in Las Vegas during the review period, 28 people provided comments.

Comments. The BLM received approximately 400 comment letters (340 on the Draft and 66 on the Supplement). The comments, which covered a wide range of topics, were grouped into 50 different categories with questions developed based on similar comments. All comments were considered in preparation of The Plan, and resulted in adjustments in The Plan to incorporate numerous clarifying statements, modify proposed actions, and revise environmental analysis. Also in response to comments, the document was reorganized to make it more user-friendly.

Specifically, The Plan responds to comments about management of desert tortoise habitat, utility corridors, Areas of Critical Environmental Concern, land disposal, air quality, off-highway vehicle events, closure of grazing allotments, and mineral withdrawals. Other comments that were helpful in revising The Plan were those that identified clarification needs, suggested editorial changes, or expressed opinions and preferences for differing alternatives.

The Plan's Contents and Organization

The Plan is one combined document, including the resource management plan and the environmental impact statement.

The Plan includes proposed objectives and management direction for the planning area. Several appendices from the draft are incorporated into The Plan's guidelines. In addition, numerous appendices containing Standard Operating Procedures were incorporated into Appendix M.

Summary tables are included to compare differences in key management objectives, directions, and impacts of the alternatives.

Summary of The Plan's Five Chapters

EIS Chapter 1 - Presents The Plan's purpose and need, describes the planning area, gives an overview of the planning process, lists planning issues and criteria, and addresses consistency with other plans.

EIS Chapter 2 - Provides objectives and management directions specific to Air, Soil, and Water; Riparian, Vegetation; Visual Resources; Areas of Critical Environmental Concern; Fish and Wildlife; Special Status Species; Forestry; Livestock Grazing; Wild Horse and Burro; Cultural Resources; Lands; Rights-of-way; Acquisition; Recreation; Wild and Scenic Rivers; Wilderness; Minerals; Hazardous Materials; and Fire Management. This chapter also identifies changes made to the document based on input from the public, other state and federal agencies, as well as BLM changes to ensure consistency with laws and regulations. This chapter represents the proposed plan that would become the Resource Management Plan for the Las Vegas District upon approval by the Nevada State Director.

EIS Chapter 3 - Describes existing environmental and resource components that could be impacted with implementation of The Plan.

EIS Chapter 4 - Includes analyses of expected impacts associated with implementing the Proposed Action described in The Plan. The following elements were used for analysis:

- Air and Water Quality
- Cultural Resources & Native American Traditional Lifeway Areas
- Oil and Gas Development Opportunities and Operations
- Areas of Critical Environmental Concern
- Biological Resources and Ecological Systems
- Livestock Grazing Opportunities and Operations
- Other Mineral Developments and Operations
- Recreation Resources and Opportunities
- Land Disposal
- Fire Management

EIS Chapter 5 - Describes public participation procedures that BLM used to develop the Draft, Supplement, and Proposed Final Resource Management Plan and Final Environmental Impact Statement (RMP/FEIS). Chapter 5 includes responses to comments and identifies adjustments in The Plan that resulted from the comments. The chapter has five sections: Introduction, Public Scoping/Participation, Consultation, Coordination, and Public Review and Comments.

Changes Between Draft, Supplement, and Proposed Plan

Changes in Document Organization

- ◆ The four appendices identifying Minerals Standard Operating Procedures in the Draft Plan are included with the Standard Operating Procedures in Appendix M of The Plan. Appendix L was added to include the approved Standards and Guidelines for Rangeland Health, which was completed by the Resource Advisory Council.
- ◆ The document's format was modified to include a letter code of 2 or 3 letters designating each resource.
- ◆ The section on Areas of Critical Environmental Concern is placed prior to the Wildlife section, which has several references to ACECs.
- ◆ Management of Special Status Species, previously addressed in the Vegetation section, is now presented in the Fish, Wildlife and Special Status Species section.
- ◆ All lands-related resources are arranged sequentially and all mineral-related actions are included in the mineral resource section. For example, although material site rights-of-way are authorized through the Lands program, its management direction is included in the Minerals section which is a more logical place for readers to find this information.
- ◆ In response to comments, The Plan has been updated and changed to clarify proposed management directions.
- ◆ Multiple cross references for objectives and management directions that were in the Draft and Supplement are not included in The Plan. Instead, to simplify wording, the guidance is placed under the most appropriate section

Changes in Document Content

- ◆ Specific wording was inserted to address air conformity requirements.
- ◆ A management direction was developed for Wilderness Study Areas and other Federal Agency withdrawn lands within proposed Areas of Critical Environmental Concern. The direction identifies action to take if such lands are released from consideration for wilderness designation or are returned to the BLM, respectively.
- ◆ Fish, Wildlife Habitat, and Special Status Plants and Animals are addressed in a section titled Wildlife. Combining these discussions helps readers locate management direction related to Wildlife and Special Status Species. Also, a management direction was added to provide for managing elk that move from U.S. Forest Service-administered lands onto BLM-administered lands.
- ◆ The Livestock Grazing section was reorganized to reflect three main objectives, and additional wording was included to incorporate the Standards and Guidelines developed by the Resource Advisory Council.
- ◆ Herd Management Area boundaries were changed to reflect original field maps showing animal locations at the time the Wild Horse and Burro Act was passed.
- ◆ A land disposal area was added west of Las Vegas to allow land exchanges for Blue Diamond Cholla habitat. Any lands acquired either adjacent to or within the existing Red Rock Canyon National Conservation Area boundary would become part of that NCA. The Las Vegas Valley and Laughlin disposal

areas are modified from original proposals based on comments received throughout the process. Also, a management direction was added to allow for repositioning of public lands, contingent on 10 criteria.

- ♦ Special Recreation Management Area boundaries changed to reflect current and future recreation. Specific management directions for non-speed events were developed using input from the public and other agencies.
- ♦ A section was added to address Hazardous materials, which were not addressed in the Draft and Supplement.
- ♦ Discussions and recommendations for specific fire initial attack areas and suppression levels, which were included in the Draft and Supplement, are not included in The Plan. These areas and levels are more appropriately addressed and determined in the Fire Management Plan.

Selected Allocations and Management Guidelines

The following summary highlights elements of management activities of highest public interest throughout the planning process.

Management Objectives and Directions

Objectives and directions were developed to provide additional clarity for managing public lands in a manner that will provide for healthy sustainable ecosystems contributing to the goods, services, social, and cultural needs of local communities, the region, and the nation. Further, the objectives and directions emphasize that BLM will continue to collaborate with local governments and involve local interests and permittees in implementing management activities identified in the Resource Management Plan. Similarly, the Standard Operating Procedures emphasize collaborative efforts.

Summary of the Proposed Action

The purpose and need for The Plan is to provide for land use designations and allocations, including recreation, Areas of Critical Environmental Concern, utility corridors, off-highway vehicles, visual resource management areas, fire management zones, disposal of public lands for community development and flood control, and extraction of sand and gravel or other minerals, consistent with all laws and regulations and the goals and objectives of the Desert Tortoise (Mojave Population) Recovery Plan.

General Guidelines By Resource Value

Air Quality

Ensure that BLM actions conform with the State Implementation Plan regarding the Non-attainment Area for carbon monoxide and particulate matter. Closely coordinate management with the Clark County Health District, where applicable.

Soil and Water

Manage for improved water quality and reduced soil erosion. Specifically, manage public lands to avoid impact to the Colorado River system.

Riparian Areas

Manage riparian areas, according to BLM directives, to achieve Proper Functioning Condition.

Vegetation

Manage for Potential Natural Community or Desired Plant Community, using criteria identified in Appendix N for determining desired plant community for desert tortoise habitat.

Visual Resource Management (VRM)

Designate VRM classes.

Areas of Critical Environmental Concern (ACEC)

The Plan proposes designation of 23 Areas of Critical Environmental Concern totaling 1,005,031 acres. The areas selected for ACEC designation have unique values that will require a high level of management attention. (Note: The tables in the Plan identify 24 ACECs, with the additional area being Bird Spring. Because this area is entirely within the expansion area for Red Rock Canyon National Conservation Area, a more protective designation, the Bird Spring area is not proposed as an ACEC.)

Four of the ACECs total approximately 74 percent of the proposed ACEC acreage (743,209 acres) and are specifically selected for desert tortoise protection: Piute/Eldorado Valley (329,440 acres), Coyote Springs Valley (75,500 acres), Mormon Mesa (151,360 acres), and Gold Butte Part A (186,909 acres). Site-specific management objectives and prescriptions are provided for these four ACECs. Management guidance includes, but is not limited to, the following:

- Lands: Retain in Federal ownership. Designate as right-of-way avoidance area, except within corridors.
- Minerals: Close to locatable minerals and solid leasables. Open to fluid mineral leasing subject to no surface occupancy stipulations. Allow material site rights-of-way only within 0.5 mile of the centerline of Federal Aid Highways. Designate as a site type right-of-way exclusion area, except within 0.5-mile of either side of Federal Aid Highways. Allow mineral material free use permits only within 0.5-mile of the centerline of Federal and state highways; and plan specified county roads in the Gold Butte area. Issue free use permits to governmental entities only.
- Range: Close to livestock grazing. Manage for zero (0) wild horses and burros.
- Roads: Require reclamation of temporary roads. Authorize new roads in response to specific proposed actions where no feasible alternative exists. Ensure access to private property.
- Wildlife: Do not allow commercial collection of flora. Allow commercial collection of fauna only when a scientifically credible study is completed demonstrating that such collection does not adversely impact affected species or their habitat. This action does not apply to hunting or trapping and casual collection as permitted by the State.
- Recreation: Designate as "Limited to designated roads and trails" for all motorized and mechanized vehicles. Prohibit off-road vehicle speed events, mountain bike races, horse endurance rides, 4-wheel drive hill climbs, mini events, publicity rides, high speed testing, and similar speed-based events. Permit commercial activities on a case-by-case basis, contingent on their consistency with recovery of desert tortoise.
- As a term and condition of the biological opinion, the BLM will implement a monitoring plan to monitor impacts on tortoise from casual, speed and organized non-speed events. As part of this monitoring program, the number of events and/or participants shall be permitted below the level shown below for a 3 year period. At the end of 3 years the BLM and Service will evaluate monitoring data and if appropriate, increase the numbers, location, seasonal restrictions to a maximum of that allowed in the

Resource Management Plan.

- Allow non-speed events subject to the following limitations:
 - For events involving more than 25 vehicles, require Recreation Use Permits.
 - For events involving more than 100 vehicles, issue permits only during the tortoise inactive season (Nov. 1 through end of February). To maintain consistency with California vehicle limit restrictions, limit the number of vehicles in any one event to 300 motorcycles or 300 four-wheeled vehicles (including All Terrain Vehicles). With the exception that if a alternative route for the Barstow-to-Vegas event is not found, resulting in the need to traverse the Piute Area of Critical Environmental Concern, the number of entrants permitted in Nevada will be consistent with that permitted by California.
 - Do not permit off-highway vehicle non-speed events between approximately April 1 to June 1 and between August 15 to October 15 (dates may vary slightly from year to year to provide a full Saturday/Sunday weekend if April 1 is during the weekend and to provide three full weekends for events prior to or including November 1).
 - Allow a maximum of 10 permitted non-speed events annually with no more than three events per ACEC during the tortoise active season (March 1 to October 31), with specific allowed dates being between March 1 to 31, June 1 to August 14, and October 16 to October 31 (see date variances in directly preceding guidance). Based on historic use, an exception to this guidance will be granted to allow an event from Mesquite through the Mormon Mesa ACEC. This event, having as many as 200 entrants and constituting two of the three annual events, will be limited to a one-way route (north-south or south-north).
 - Allow a maximum of 12 permitted non-speed events annually during the tortoise inactive season (November 1st to end of February), with no more than four events per Area of Critical Environmental Concern.
 - Restrict speed of vehicles in permitted events (including but not limited to motorcycle or buggy rallies and mountain bike rides) to the legal, posted or unposted, speed limit of roads used during the event. (Note: Clark County has 25 miles per hour speed limit for unposted roads.)

Fish and Wildlife and Special Status Species Management

Protect habitat of plant and animal species in the district. Follow very specific management direction provided for desert tortoise. Manage Desert Tortoise habitat to achieve recovery criteria defined in the Tortoise Recovery Plan and to ultimately delist the desert tortoise. Protect Special Status Species habitat to preclude future listing of additional species as threatened or endangered.

Manage public lands identified as important for recovery of Federally listed species as threatened and endangered species conservation areas consistent with direction established by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the Nevada Division of Wildlife to complement the Clark County Desert Conservation Plan and Multiple Species Conservation Plan.

Forestry

Manage for mesquite woodlands and desert vegetation sale potential. Focus on managing for healthy mesquite stands as habitat for threatened, endangered, and special status species. Restrict wood cutting.

Livestock Grazing

Make approximately 611,000 acres available for livestock grazing. Intensively manage authorizations on allotments open to livestock grazing in accordance with the Standards and Guidelines for Rangeland Health.

Note: Approximately 2.7 million acres would be unavailable to grazing due to implementation of the Desert Tortoise Recovery Plan, lack of forage or range improvements, and protection needs of other sensitive resources. Presently, about 50 percent of allotments open to livestock grazing (5 of 11 allotments) actually receive use by livestock. Also, 3 of the 11 open allotments are being considered for closure in recommendations so recent that they are not addressed in The Plan. Closure of all disposal areas is also proposed.

Livestock grazing may occur on open allotments in desert tortoise habitat outside Areas of Critical Environmental Concern under Prescription 2 guidelines as follows: From March 1 to October 14, as long as forage utilization does not exceed 40 percent on key perennial grasses, forbs, and shrubs. Between October 15 and end of February, forage utilization will not exceed 50 percent on key perennial grasses and 45 percent on key shrubs and perennial forbs. The option to reinitiate consultation to change these parameters is available on a case-by-case basis.

Wild Horse and Burro

Expand three Herd Management Areas to existing fenced highways for ease of management. This provision is supported by data showing location of the animals in the early 1970s. The Wild Horse and Burro Act required that Herd Management Areas include those areas used by animals as of the passing of the Act in 1971. Historical and existing data supports the new boundaries.

Set Appropriate Management Level base level for seven Herd Management Areas. Three Herd Management Areas would have an Appropriate Management Level of Zero (0). Appropriate Management Levels can be adjusted, based on monitoring data.

Cultural

Establish two Traditional Lifeway Areas (Spirit Mountain and Virgin Mountain/Gold Butte).

Land Disposal

Public lands specifically identified for disposal total 175,314 acres and do not include any disposals by Desert Land Entry, Indian allotment, or the Carey Act.

The Plan identifies the process for improving land ownership patterns to assist BLM in meeting management objectives and direction. Any adjustments to land ownership patterns would be coordinated with local governments, adjoining landowners, and existing permittees. There would also be a public review process, as well as further site-specific reviews of the properties under consideration for adjustment.

- Lands not within a disposal boundary could potentially be suitable for land tenure adjustments through land exchanges. These lands, which are outside the proposed disposal areas, could be available for exchange only if all 10 specific disposal criteria as noted below, were met. This adjustment provision would reduce the need to complete land use plan amendments in the future. A plan amendment would be required for any land disposal request outside the established disposal areas that does not meet the 10 criteria and creation or expansion of an existing disposal area.
 1. The lands would serve the purpose of : 1) community expansion and economic development; 2) local government needs; or 3) to facilitate Federal land management and minimize BLM administrative costs.
 2. The lands are not located adjacent to Congressionally mandated disposal boundaries.

3. The lands to be disposed of are located outside any Area of Critical Environmental Concern, Traditional Lifeway Area, Special Recreation Management Area, Right-of-way corridor, Wilderness Study Area, active communication site, riparian site or cultural sites eligible for inclusion on the National Register of Historic Places.
4. The public lands are not encumbered by an existing permit or lease that would preclude the disposal action.
5. The lands do not include Threatened, Endangered, Special Status Species Habitat or other crucial wildlife habitat.
6. There are no other public uses that outweigh the value of the parcel.
7. It is a parcel of land acquired for a specific purpose and it is no longer required for that or any other Federal purpose.
8. Local communities support the exchange and close coordination with the USF&WS, the Nevada Division of Wildlife, and Clark County is undertaken.
9. Public access would be improved.
10. Any other specific values or concerns not identified above would be analyzed at the time of the proposal to determine if disposal would be in the best interest of the public.

Rights-of-Way

Designate utility corridors according to the final proposed corridor locations. These corridor locations were identified through coordination with other Federal and State agencies, as well as the public. Also, where possible, the corridor locations were designed to avoid private lands and to use existing powerline rights-of-way as a basis. Rights-of-way for flood control, rights-of-way avoidance, and exclusion areas are identified. Any future rights-of-way for communication sites would require development of management direction before being approved.

Acquisition

Identify general type of land, as well as specific areas and sites, that are in the public interest for BLM to acquire.

Recreation

Realign existing Special Recreation Management Areas into eight SRMAs to more specifically focus BLM resources and staff. Manage these areas for their specific, sometimes different, recreational values according to direction provided in The Plan for such actions as semi-primitive recreation, off-road vehicle use, recreation opportunities in areas having sensitive resources, off-road events, non-speed events, and competitive off-road events. The Las Vegas Valley Special Recreation Management Area would be closed to off-road events, casual off-road vehicle use, shooting of firearms, and camping.

Off-road vehicle designations are identified as open; closed; limited to designated roads and trails; or limited to existing roads, trails and dry washes. Specific detailed management of speed and non-speed events are identified. Approximately 24,600 acres are designated as open to all motorized and mechanical vehicles; 2,186,500 acres as limited to existing roads, trails and washes; 1,117,250 acres as limited to designated roads and trails; and 3,760 acres as closed to all motorized and mechanical vehicles.

Cave management: Protect cave resources and animals, specifically bats that inhabit some caves. Wild and Scenic Rivers, which is a very limited resource in the Las Vegas District, will be managed according to protection pursuant to the Wild and Scenic River Act of 1968.

Wilderness

Follow Wilderness Study Area management guidelines pending final Congressional decision on Wilderness designation. Release the Logandale FLPMA 202 Wilderness Study Area (which was omitted from the original wilderness review) from further wilderness consideration.

Locatable, Leasable and Saleable Minerals

Lands within Las Vegas BLM District are open to location, lease and sale of minerals as follows:

Open to locatable minerals subject to standard terms and conditions:	2,135,146 acres
Open to mineral leasing subject to standard terms and conditions:	1,909,351 acres
Open to fluid mineral leasing with a No Surface Occupancy Stipulation:	866,067 acres
Open to saleable mineral disposal subject to standard terms and conditions:	2,117,331 acres

Hazardous Materials

Prevent hazardous materials contamination and reduce risks in contaminated areas.

Fire Management

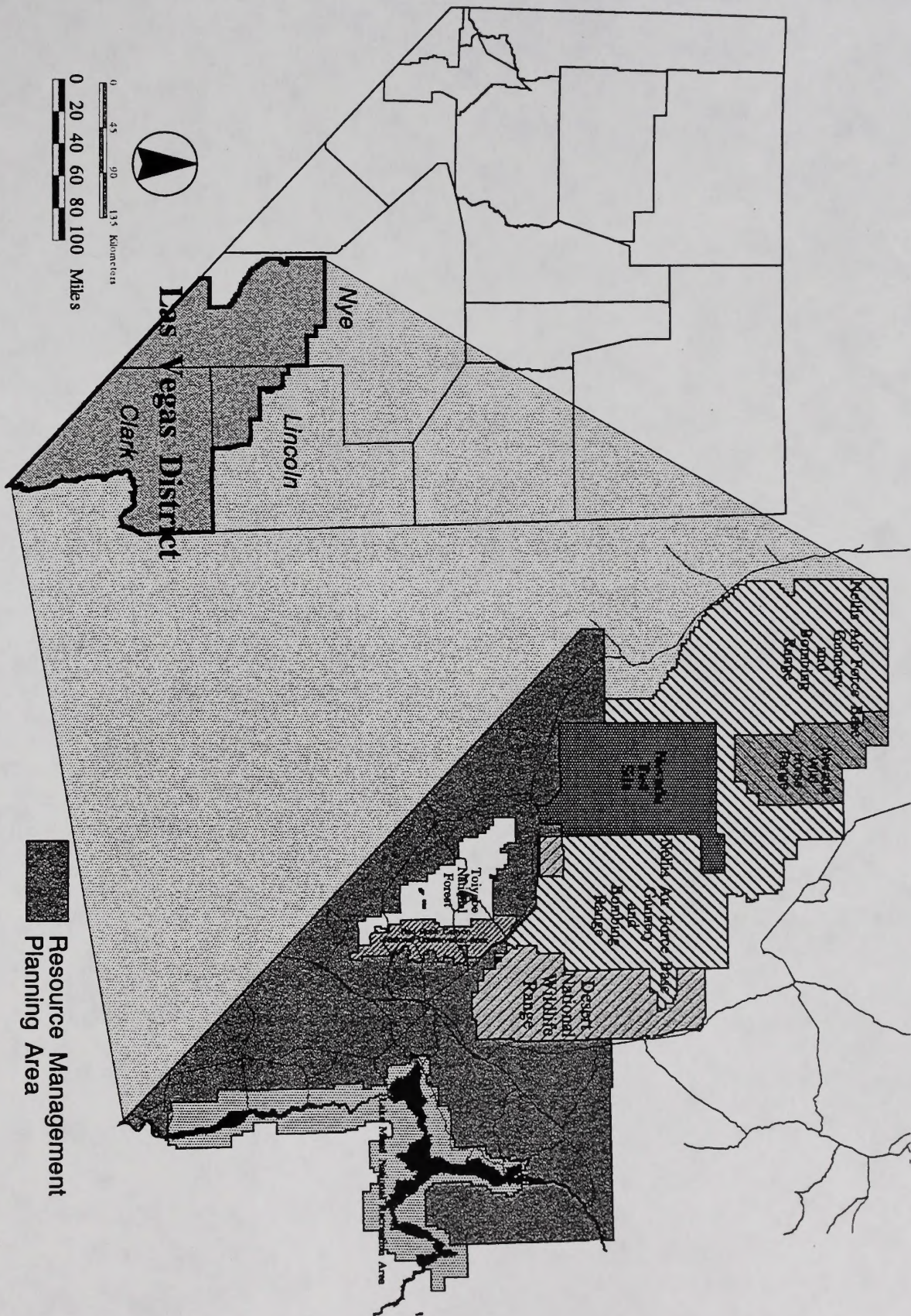
Identify three suppression areas based on similar resource values, suppression requirements, and urban rural interface. The recently developed Fire Management Plan and the Plan are consistent.

The Next Step

When the Proposed RMP/EIS is complete, a 30-day protest period and 60-day Governor's Consistency review will be announced simultaneously. Then, after considering any comments received, a Record of Decision (ROD) will be prepared for issuance by the Nevada BLM State Director, at which time the proposed plan (excluding any portion under protest) will become final. Approval will be withheld on any portion of The Plan under protest until protest resolution is complete.

Within 90 days after approval of The Plan, an implementation schedule will be developed to identify plan decisions and implementation priorities, as well as the sequence and associated costs of the various actions being implemented. There will be continued public involvement and coordination with local county governments, as well as state and other Federal agencies. Periodic reports will also be made available to the public to summarize The Plan's progress and to forecast future management activities. Monitoring of The Plan will be done to determine if any plan modification is required; and if so, the plan amendment process will be conducted with continued public involvement.

For additional information, contact Jeffrey G. Steinmetz at (702) 647-5097.



Bureau of Land Management
Las Vegas District

Resource Management Plan

Map # 1-1

Prepared July 11, 1997

The data contained herein is for informational purposes only. No liability is assumed as to the accuracy or completeness of the data for purposes other than originally provided.

The data was prepared using the BLM ESRI ARC/INFO geographic information system using the ESRI ArcView system.

